

# TECHNICAL NOTES

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WYOMING

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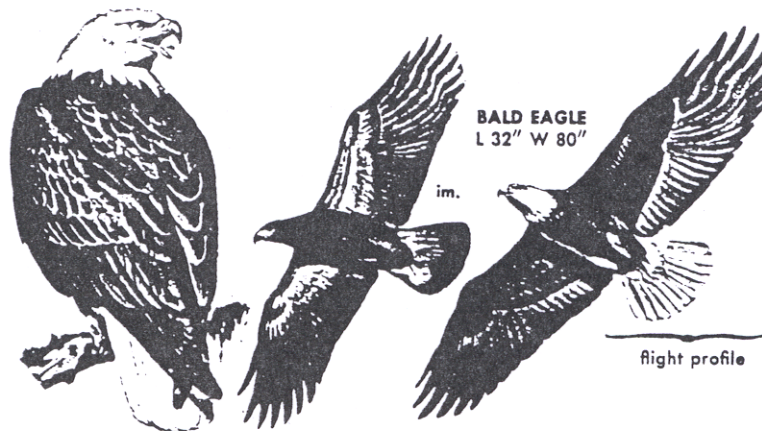
Subject: BALD EAGLE\*

## General

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is a diurnal raptor associated with lakes and rivers and adjacent treeland. The bald eagle is a winter resident in this region.

## Food Requirements

The bald eagle is an opportunistic feeder and adapts its food habits in response to prey availability. In general, most foods are associated with aquatic ecosystems, although eagles may winter far from water. Most wintering bald eagles prey primarily on fish and waterfowl, although fish are the preferred prey when available. Eagles also feed readily on carrion and small mammals. In northern Utah, carrion (primarily hunter-killed waterfowl) was the major portion of the diet. Wintering bald eagles in the desert valleys of Utah County, Utah, fed primarily on hunter-killed and road-killed black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*). In southeastern Colorado, wintering eagles are found on the open plains where they must subsist largely on small mammals.



Prepared by: Richard Rintamaki, State Biologist

*LCJ*  
State Resource Conservationist

\*Information taken from Ecoregion M3113 Handbook and Habitat Suitability Index Models, Wildlife Species Narratives (literature searches), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various dates between 1978-1984.

Feeding eagles concentrated near areas of open water along frozen main river channels in Illinois. Pools below dams were not very important in attracting winter concentrations of bald eagles.

#### Water Requirements

Although water is a major habitat component for many wintering bald eagles, they may also be found far from water, indicating that the need for drinking water is not critical.

#### Cover Requirements

Wintering eagles may roost singly or in small groups, but typically use communal roosting areas. In Utah, the maximum number of eagles observed in a communal roost was 82, although average nightly concentrations in four roosts ranged from 5 to 27 eagles. Roost sites are usually in large trees. Roosts may be located near feeding areas, but eagles may also travel several miles between suitable roosting cover and preferred feeding sites.

Perches are an important winter habitat component near feeding areas. Perches are used for resting, hunting, or preening and may be trees, fenceposts, or power poles. Natural perches are preferred over manmade structures.

#### Reproductive Requirements

Few records exist of bald eagles nesting in this region. Reproductive requirements will not affect habitat evaluation criteria for the bald eagle in this ecoregion.

#### Special Habitat Requirements

Winter roosting areas usually consist of preferred groups of trees to which eagles return nightly.

#### Interspersion Requirements

Bald eagles may travel several miles between winter roost sites and feeding areas. In Illinois, eagles in winter ranged over a 3- to 4-mile (4.8 to 6.4 km) stretch of the Mississippi River for a few days and then apparently wandered away from the study area up to 30 miles (48 km).

#### Special Considerations

Suitable wintering areas for bald eagles are characterized by their relative isolation from human disturbance. Recommended management guidelines for eagle feeding areas include the prohibition of toxic chemicals in watersheds where eagles are feeding, no clearcutting within 200 feet (61 m) of the shore of any water body used by eagles, discouragement of any construction within 1/4 mile (0.4 km) of the shore, and limited human activity. Logging and other human disturbance should also be prohibited within a communal roosting area. The major mortality factor of bald eagles is shooting, despite Federal laws prohibiting such acts.